HYNDBURN BOROUGH COUNCIL
PETITION SCHEME

Petitions

The Council welcomes petitions and recognises that petitions are one way in which people can let us know their concerns. This petition scheme explains the ways in which we will respond to petitions and lets you know how to go about sending a valid petition to us.

What is a petition?

We will treat something as a valid petition if it:

- is signed by a number of people (we require at least 10 signatories); and
- calls for the Council to take action in some way; and
- is not an excluded petition (see below to find out which petitions are excluded)

What should a petition contain?

Your petition should:

- explain what it is about. It should include a clear and concise statement of your concerns and the action that you wish the Council to take. This will help us to decide the best way to respond
- give the name and contact details of the petition organiser
- include the names, addresses and signatures of at least 10 people (which can include the petition organiser)

Who can organise a petition?

We will accept petitions if they have been organised by someone who lives, works or studies in Hyndburn.
The petition should be accompanied by contact details for the petition organiser, including a valid postal address. This is the person we will contact to explain how we will respond to the petition. The contact details of the petition organiser will not be placed on our website.

Who can sign a petition?
Anyone can sign a petition, as long as they live, work or study in Hyndburn. As well as a signature, we also need the persons name and their postal address, which can be the place where they live, work or study.

How do I send in a petition?

Paper petitions can be sent (or delivered in person) to:

Member Services
Hyndburn Borough Council
Scaitcliffe House
Ormerod Street
Accrington
BB5 0PF.

Petitions can also be created, signed and submitted online by following this link http://democracy.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/mgEPetitionListDisplay.aspx?bcr=1. This our preferred method of receiving your Petition.

What happens then?

All petitions sent to the Council will receive a written acknowledgement within 10 working days of receipt. This acknowledgement will set out what we plan to do with the petition and will be sent to the petition organiser. We will also let you know when you can expect to hear from us again.

If we can do what your petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that we have taken the action requested and the petition will be closed.

If the petition has enough signatures to trigger a council debate, or a senior officer giving evidence, then the acknowledgment will confirm this and tell you when and where the meeting will take place.

If the petition needs more investigation, we will tell you the steps we plan to take.

We will also publish the petition on our website to ensure that people know what we are doing in response to the petition, except in cases where this would be inappropriate. When you sign an e-petition you can elect to receive this information by e-mail. We will not send you anything which is not relevant to the e-petition you have signed.

What are excluded petitions?
We will not accept a petition if:
• we consider it to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate;
• it relates to a planning decision
• it relates to a licensing decision
• it concerns a matter relating to an individual or organisation and in respect of which that individual or organisation already has a statutory right of appeal or a review (such as council tax banding and non-domestic rates, where other procedures apply).
• it asks for a senior officer to give evidence in respect of their private life instead of something for which they are responsible as part of their job.
• it is a repeat petition (i.e. if the Council has considered another petition on the same subject within 12 months of receipt of your petition)

If your petition cannot be accepted we will still acknowledge receipt of it within 10 working days and we will explain why we consider it to be an excluded petition.

In the period immediately before an election or referendum we may need to deal with your petition differently or we may need to delay its consideration until the election or referendum has taken place – if this is the case we will explain the reasons and let you know the timescale which will apply.

How will the Council respond to petitions?

Our response to a petition will depend on what a petition asks for and how many people have signed it, but may include one or more of the following:

• taking the action requested in the petition
• considering the petition at a council meeting
• holding an inquiry into the matter
• undertaking research into the matter
• holding a public meeting
• referring the petition for consideration by the Council’s overview and scrutiny committee (which is a committee of councillors who are responsible for scrutinising the work of the Council.
• writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition

In addition to these steps, the Council will consider all the specific actions it can potentially take on the issues highlighted in a petition.

If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control (for example the local railway or hospital) we will consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. The Council works with a large number of local partners and where possible will work with these partners to respond to your petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason (for example if what the petition calls for conflicts with Council policy), then we will set out the reasons for this to you.
If your petition is about something that a different Council is responsible for we will give consideration to what the best method is for responding to it. This might consist of simply forwarding the petition to the other Council. In any event we will always notify you of the action we have taken.

**Council Debate**

If a petition contains more than 1,000 signatures (or 500 signatures if it relates to a local issue that affects no more than 2 electoral wards within Hyndburn) it will be debated by the full Council unless it is a petition asking for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting. This means that the issue raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all councillors can attend. The petition organiser will be given five minutes to present the petition at the meeting and the petition will then be discussed by councillors for a maximum of 30 minutes. The Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. They may decide to take the action the petition requests, not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant committee or chief officer. Where the issue is one on which the Council’s Cabinet are required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to the Cabinet to inform that decision. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision and the decision will also be published on our website.

**Officer evidence**

Your petition may ask for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting about something for which the officer is responsible as part of their job. For example, your petition may ask a senior council officer to explain progress on an issue, or to explain the advice given to councillors to enable them to make a particular decision.

If your petition contains at least 500 signatures (or 250 signatures if it is a local issue that affects no more than 2 electoral wards within Hyndburn), the relevant senior officer will give evidence at the next convenient public meeting of the Council’s overview and scrutiny committee.

The following senior staff can be called to give evidence:

- the Chief Executive
- the Deputy Chief Executive
- the Executive Director (Legal & Democratic Services)
- the Chief Planning & Transportation Officer
- the Head of Regeneration & Housing
- Head of Community Services
- Head of Environmental Partnerships

You should be aware that the overview and scrutiny committee may decide that it would be more appropriate for another officer to give evidence instead of any officer named in the petition – for instance if the named officer has changed jobs or if the named officer is not the officer responsible for the service in question.
The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may make a report or recommendations to the Council. A copy of any report or recommendations will be sent to the petition organiser.

The Council’s Petitions Website

On our website we have a petitions page that gives information about the valid petitions we receive.

Within 5 working days of receipt of a valid petition we will update the petitions page on our website to include the subject matter of the petition, its date of receipt and the number of signatories or petitioners. The petition organiser’s name and contact details will only be included on the website if s/he so requests.

Once we have decided how the petition will be dealt with we will include this information on the petitions page of our website at the same time as the information is sent to the petition organiser.

Petition details will kept on the website for 6 months.

E-Petitions

We welcome e-petitions which you can create and submit through http://democracy.hyndburnbc.gov.uk/mgEPetitionListDisplay.aspx?bcr=1

E-petitions are subject to the same requirements as paper petitions set out above.

If you are organising an e-petition you must;

- register when you first use the site.
- provide us with your name, postal address and e-mail address
- decide how long you would like your petition to be open for signatures. Most petitions run for three months, but you can choose a shorter or longer timeframe.

When you create an e-petition, it may take five working days before it is published online. This is because we have to check that the content of your petition is suitable before it is made available for signature.

If we feel we cannot publish your petition for some reason, we will contact you within this time to explain why. You will be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish.

When an e-petition has closed for signature, you may submit it, in which case it will be submitted to the Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services); or you may extend the duration of the petition; or you may cancel it. In the same way as a paper petition, you will receive an acknowledgement within 10 working days.
Notification that there is a response on the website will be e-mailed to everyone who has signed the e-petition and elected to receive this information. The response will be published on the website.

**How do I “sign” an e-petition?**

You can see all the e-petitions currently available for signature here

When you sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide your name, your postal address, your postcode and a valid e-mail address. When you have submitted this information you will be sent an e-mail to the e-mail address you have provided. This e-mail will include a link which you must click on in order to confirm that the e-mail address is valid. Once this step is complete your “signature” will be added to the petition. People visiting the e-petition will be able to see your name in the list of those who have signed it but your contact details will not be visible.

**The role of Ward Councillors**

When a petition is received which relates to a local matter (particularly affecting specific electoral wards), we will send a copy of the petition to each relevant Ward Councillor at the same time as acknowledging receipt of the petition to the petition organiser.